

# GIC Q&A

**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
GROUP INSURANCE COMMISSION**

[www.mass.gov/gic](http://www.mass.gov/gic)

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**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS**

Your  
**BenefitsConnection**  
Group Insurance Commission

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# GIC REMINDERS

Please remember to notify the GIC if you:

- ◆ Add dependents or a spouse
- ◆ Get divorced or remarried
- ◆ Move

Active employees must notify their GIC Coordinator. Retirees must write to the GIC. Failure to notify the GIC of these changes, such as divorce or remarriage, may result in financial penalties.

## Dependent Coverage

Unmarried dependent coverage ends at the end of the month in which the dependent turns 19. If your dependent is a full-time student, you must apply to the GIC for student coverage. If approved, student eligibility must be re-certified twice a year. Married dependents are not eligible. See the Family Status Changes section for more information.

## Retirement and Your GIC Benefits

Before you retire, call or visit the State Retirement Board, or your local retirement board, for retirement counseling.

Before you retire, evaluate your health and optional life insurance options. You may want to change your coverage at retirement. See your GIC Coordinator for GIC forms and return completed forms to your GIC Coordinator.

## Turning Age 65

If you are 65 or over, call or visit your local Social Security office for confirmation of Social Security and Medicare benefit eligibility.

If you are eligible for Medicare Part A for free and if you **continue** working for the state after age 65, you should enroll in Medicare Part A. You and your spouse should NOT enroll in Medicare Part B until you (the insured) retire from state service.

If you are eligible for Medicare Part A for free, and if you are **retired**, you **MUST** enroll in Medicare Parts A and B to be covered by the GIC. The spouse of an active employee who is 65 or over should sign up for Medicare Part A when he or she (the spouse) reaches age 65 and must sign up for Medicare Part B when the employee retires from state service.

See this booklet's Medicare section for more information.

### Q How do I change my address?

**A** Active employees should advise their GIC Coordinator. Retirees must send a letter to the GIC reporting the address change. Be sure to include your name, GIC Identification Number (usually your Social Security Number), signature, and date.

**Q** I am getting married; how do I add my new spouse to my GIC coverage?

**A** Complete the Insurance Data Form (IDF), and include a copy of your marriage certificate. If you do not have family coverage prior to your marriage, you must also complete a GIC Insurance Enrollment and Change Form (Form-1) to change to family coverage. If you are in the Commonwealth PPO or a GIC HMO, you must also complete the PPO or HMO application. Active employees should return forms to their GIC Coordinator; Retirees should send GIC forms to the GIC and return HMO/PPO applications to the Plan.

## DEPENDENT AND STUDENT COVERAGE

### Q How can I add a dependent under age 19 to my GIC coverage?

**A** Complete the Insurance Data Form (IDF) and include a copy of the dependent's birth certificate. The GIC must be able to link the dependent to the insured and/or the insured's covered spouse. If you do not have family coverage prior to adding the dependent to your coverage, you must also complete and return the GIC Insurance Enrollment and Change Form (Form-1) to change to family coverage. Active employees should return forms to their GIC Coordinator. Retirees should send GIC forms to the GIC. If you are in the Commonwealth PPO or a GIC HMO, you must also complete and return to the Plan the PPO or HMO application.

**Q** My child is turning 19. How can he/she continue health insurance coverage?

**A** Coverage for an unmarried dependent ends at the end of the month in which the dependent turns 19. If the dependent is a full-time student, the GIC insured must apply for dependent student coverage and, if approved, must re-certify student status twice a year. To apply for student coverage, complete your health plan's Statement of Verification for Student Coverage form. If your child is not a full-time student, he/she may continue GIC coverage for up to 36 months under GIC COBRA coverage, paying 102% of the full cost premium, or can elect non-group conversion coverage. To apply for Dependent COBRA coverage, complete and return the GIC's Dependent COBRA application. The COBRA application must be submitted within 60 days of the coverage end date. To apply for non-group conversion, contact your health plan.

**Q My child is handicapped and is turning 19. How can he or she continue GIC health coverage?**

**A** If your child is mentally or physically incapable of earning his/ her own living, you can call the GIC for a handicapped dependent application. The child's disability must have occurred prior to age 19. Family coverage is required.

**Q When does GIC health coverage end for a dependent child who marries?**

**A** Coverage ends on the day that he/ she marries.

**Q My student-dependent (age 19 or over) is graduating. When does health coverage end?**

**A** His/ her coverage ends at the end of the month in which he/ she ceases to be a full-time student. At that point, your child is eligible for GIC COBRA health coverage or for non-group conversion coverage.

**Q My student-dependent (age 19 or over) will be finishing classes in December or January, but will not graduate until May. When will his/her health coverage end?**

**A** Your student-dependent's (age 19 or over) health coverage ends at the end of the month in which your child ceases to be a full time student (e.g. December or January). At that point your child may continue health insurance coverage through GIC COBRA or by converting to a non-group policy.

**Q Is my student-dependent (age 19 or over) covered during the summer months?**

**A** Your student-dependent is covered during the summer only if he/ she was enrolled as a full-time student for the entire spring semester and is enrolled as a full-time student for the fall semester.

**Q When does a student's coverage end if he/she is on a school-approved medical leave?**

**A** Student coverage for a dependent on a school-approved medical leave of absence ends on the last day of the semester in which he/she last attended class; thereafter the student may elect GIC COBRA coverage or non-group conversion.

**Q When does a student's coverage end when he/she withdraws from classes?**

**A** Student coverage for a dependent who withdraws from classes ends on the last day of the month in which he or she last attended classes. The student may elect GIC COBRA coverage or non-group conversion.

**Q My student-dependent is turning 24; what happens to his/her health coverage?**

**A** Your dependent can continue health coverage provided he/she is still attending school full time. You must re-certify student status twice yearly, and pay 100% of the premium.

**Q** I am a state employee/retiree who is getting divorced. What do I need to do?

**A** You must notify the GIC when you are divorced by sending the GIC a letter with your name, GIC identification number (usually your Social Security Number), address, and signature. Be sure to include your former spouse's last known home address. You must send a copy of the following sections of the divorce decree: page with the 'divorce absolute' date (the date your divorce became final), the health insurance provisions, and signature pages. The GIC will provide you and your former spouse with information about your former spouse continuing coverage.

**Q** As a divorced employee/retiree who is remarrying, what do I need to do?

**A** You must notify the GIC in writing when you remarry that you have done so, and send a copy of your new marriage certificate and your former spouse's last known home address. Please include the following sections of your divorce decree: page with the 'divorce absolute' date (the date divorce became final), health insurance provisions, and signature pages.

To add your new spouse to your health plan, complete a GIC Insurance Data Form (IDF) and send the GIC a letter with your name, GIC ID number (usually your Social Security Number), address and signature and a copy of your new marriage certificate. Include your new spouse's name, date of birth, and Social Security Number. If you are enrolled in the Commonwealth PPO or a GIC HMO, you must also complete and return to the Plan the PPO or HMO application.

**Q** I am a state employee/retiree and my former spouse is getting remarried; what do I need to do?

**A** Send the remarriage date of your former spouse and your former spouse's last known home address in writing to the Director of Operations at the GIC. Your former spouse may apply for COBRA coverage by completing the Dependent COBRA application and sending it to the GIC.

**Q** I am the former spouse of a state employee/retiree and am getting remarried. What do I need to do?

**A** When you remarry, your GIC coverage ends as of the date of remarriage. To continue your coverage through COBRA, complete the Dependent COBRA application and send it to the GIC along with the date of your remarriage.

# EMPLOYMENT CHANGES

## Q As a new employee, when do my GIC benefits begin?

**A** GIC benefits begin on the first day of the month following 60 calendar days or two calendar months of employment, whichever comes first. Your basic life and health insurance benefits are on a pre-tax basis unless you opt out. GIC benefits can include: basic life; basic life and health insurance; long term disability; optional life insurance; dental/vision for employees not covered by collective bargaining (primarily managers, legislators, legislative and executive office staff); and several GIC pre-tax programs: the Health Care Spending Account (HCSA) Program and the Dependent Care Assistance Program (DCAP). DCAP enrollment is effective as of your date of hire.

## Q I am an active state employee who works fewer than 18<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> hours per week in a 37.5-hour workweek or 20 hours per week in a 40-hour workweek; am I eligible for GIC benefits?

**A** No

## Q What happens to my GIC benefits if I work fewer than 18<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> hours in a 37.5-hour workweek or 20 hours in a 40-hour workweek?

**A** Your GIC coverage will end at the end of the month following the month your hours are reduced, provided your premium for that month is paid. You may elect to continue coverage through GIC COBRA or through non-group conversion.

## Q If my salary changes, does it affect my costs or GIC benefits?

**A** Yes, premiums and benefits for optional life insurance and/or Long Term Disability coverage are based on your salary and age. Certain active employees' basic life and health insurance premiums are also based on salary. See the rate sheets on our web site for details.

## Q I am taking an approved leave of absence without pay for medical reasons. May I continue to pay part cost of the premium for my GIC benefits?

**A** You may apply to continue paying for your basic life and health insurance premiums at the employee contribution rate (the contribution percentage you were paying while you were receiving a paycheck). Submit a completed Insurance Enrollment and Change Form (Form-1) and a completed Application to Continue Part Cost Premiums (Form 11) to the GIC. You, your Agency Head and physician must all complete the Form 11 before it will be considered. In the case of a leave without pay for reasons of personal illness, you must exhaust your vacation, sick, and compensatory time before a Form 11 can be submitted. The GIC will notify you of its decision. If you do not pay your premium, or your agency no longer continues your employment, your coverage will end.

**Q** I am taking an approved unpaid leave of absence under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). How long may I continue my GIC health and life coverage?

**A** You will be able to continue your GIC coverage at the employee contribution percentage for twelve weeks.

**Q** What are my options when I go on military leave?

**A** Employees with GIC coverage taking an unpaid military leave of absence may do one of the following:

- ◆ Cancel all insurance coverage and be reinstated upon return from military leave. The employee will be reinstated with the same GIC coverage he or she carried immediately prior to the unpaid military leave of absence.
- ◆ Cancel health coverage and retain life insurance only coverage. You will be directly billed at the employee contribution percentage for the life insurance coverage; bills will be sent to your address on file at the GIC. (Note: Life insurance proceeds are only payable if the insured dies in instances other than "a result of combat, war, or any act of war, whether such war is declared or undeclared.")
- ◆ Employees with family coverage may want to consider benefits offered to military members by the Federal Government. Or, they may continue GIC coverage. The GIC will directly bill employees for the part cost premium (the employee contribution rate) at their home address. As long as the monthly premiums are paid, the employees' families may continue group benefits.
- ◆ Employees with individual coverage may cancel all their coverage, which can be reinstated upon their return from military leave.



## LEAVING STATE SERVICE

(For all options, complete GIC Insurance Enrollment and Change Form (Form-1) and return to your GIC Coordinator.)

**Q** I am leaving state service but I have fewer than ten years of full-time service (as determined by my retirement board). Therefore, I am not eligible for a state pension. May I continue my health and life coverage with the GIC?

**A** Yes. If you are leaving state service for any reason other than termination for gross misconduct, you may continue your coverage with some limitations on time and/or benefit levels in one of the following ways:

- ◆ COBRA - health only. You have 60 days to elect COBRA coverage, but the coverage begins the first day of the month after your coverage as an active employee ended. To avoid owing retroactive premium, send in your COBRA application promptly to the GIC. (Complete and return the GIC COBRA application available through your GIC Coordinator or on our website):
  - Benefit: Allows you to stay in the same plan with the same group benefit.
  - Drawbacks: You pay 100% of the premium, plus 2% for administration (no Commonwealth contribution). Maximum duration of coverage is 18 months.
- ◆ Convert to Non-Group health coverage with your current Plan (contact your Plan for the application):
  - Benefit: Can keep coverage beyond 18 months.
  - Drawback: Benefits are almost always less comprehensive than GIC coverage.
- ◆ Life Insurance Portability – Continue your amount of basic life and optional life coverage with some limitations (complete and return the GIC life insurance carrier's application):
  - Benefit: Continue term life insurance at a competitive rate.
  - Drawback: Does not include health coverage.
- ◆ Convert to Non-Group life coverage with the current carrier (complete and return the GIC life insurance carrier's application).
  - Benefit: Ability to continue some life insurance coverage.
  - Drawback: Benefits almost always lower than GIC plan coverage and more expensive.

**Q** I am leaving state service, but I am not retiring yet. I have ten or more years of full-time service (as determined by the State Retirement Board, or my retirement board), I am eligible for a state pension and I am leaving my retirement monies in the state's retirement system. How can I continue my health and life coverage with the GIC?

**A** The GIC recommends that you elect Deferred Retirement coverage. If you are getting health coverage elsewhere, the GIC suggests that you keep, at a

minimum, basic life insurance, paying 100% of the premium until retirement. At retirement, you may resume GIC health coverage; the Commonwealth will contribute the prevailing contribution percentage for retirees. If you are not getting health coverage elsewhere, keep your GIC basic life and health insurance paying 100% of the premiums until retirement.

If you decide not to leave your money in your retirement system, your benefits as a Deferred Retiree end. You may elect to continue your health and life coverage, with some limitations on time and/or benefit levels, in one of the following ways: GIC COBRA health coverage only, conversion to non-group health coverage with current carrier, portability of life insurance, or conversion to non-group life insurance with the current carrier.

**Q I am leaving state service and have twenty or more years of state service (at any age) or ten or more years of state service and I am age 55. How can I continue my health and life coverage with the GIC?**

**A** If you retire after twenty or more years of state service (at any age) or ten or more years of state service at age 55 or over, you are eligible for health and life insurance coverage. See the Retirement section for additional information.

Should you elect not to retire, the GIC recommends that you elect Deferred Retirement coverage (see previous answer).

**Q As an active employee I had Long Term Disability (LTD) insurance. What happens to this coverage when I leave state service?**

**A** LTD is income replacement coverage for active employees only. When you leave state service, your LTD coverage ends.

**Q As an active employee, I had GIC Dental/Vision coverage for legislators, legislative and Executive Office staff, and managers. What happens to this coverage when I leave state service?**

**A** The GIC Dental/Vision plan is for eligible active employees only and therefore it ends when you leave state service. You may, however, continue dental/vision coverage for up to 18 months through COBRA. You will be billed directly for 102% of the premium under this option. Fill out the GIC Dental/Vision COBRA form and mail it to the GIC.

**Q As an active employee, I participate in the Health Care Spending Account program (HCSA). May I keep this benefit when I leave state service?**

**A** Although your pre-tax benefit ends when you leave state service, you may continue to make post-tax contributions through COBRA. Complete and return the HCSA COBRA application to the carrier.

**Q As an active employee, I participate in the Dependent Care Assistance Program (DCAP). May I keep this coverage when I leave state service?**

**A** DCAP is for active employees only. When you leave state service, your enrollment in the plan ends.

*(For all options, complete GIC Insurance Enrollment and Change Form (Form-1) and return to your GIC Coordinator.)*

**Q** I have been laid off and I have fewer than ten years of full-time service (as determined by my retirement board). Therefore, I am not eligible for a state pension. May I continue my health and life insurance coverage?

**A** The GIC recommends that you elect **39-week life and health layoff coverage** paying 100% of the premium. Complete 39-week section on Insurance Enrollment and Change Form (Form-1). At the end of the 39 weeks, you can elect COBRA health coverage for up to 9 additional months.

If you do not elect 39-week life and health layoff coverage, you may also continue your coverage with some limitations on time and/or benefit levels in one of the following ways:

- ◆ COBRA – health insurance only. You have 60 days to elect COBRA coverage, but the coverage begins the first day of the month after your coverage as an active employee ended. To avoid owing retroactive premium, send in your application promptly. (Complete and return the GIC COBRA application available through your GIC Coordinator or on our website):
  - Benefit: Allows you to stay in the same health plan with the same group benefits.
  - Drawbacks: You pay 100% of the full-cost premium plus 2% for administration (no Commonwealth contribution). Maximum coverage period is 18 months.
- ◆ Convert to Non-Group health coverage with current carrier (contact your Plan for the application):
  - Benefit: Can keep coverage indefinitely as long as you pay the premium.
  - Drawback: Benefits almost always lower than GIC plan coverage and costs are higher.
- ◆ Life Insurance Portability – Continue basic life and /or optional life coverage under portability option (complete and return the GIC life insurance carrier's application).
  - Benefit: Continue term life coverage at a competitive rate.
  - Drawback: Does not include health insurance coverage.
- ◆ Convert to Non-Group life insurance with current carrier (complete and return the application you receive from the GIC's life insurance carrier).
  - Benefit: Ability to continue some life insurance coverage.
  - Drawback: Benefits almost always lower than GIC plan coverage and more expensive.

**Q I have been laid off and I have ten years or more of full-time service and am eligible for a state pension (as determined by my retirement board). I am leaving my retirement money in the state's retirement system. May I continue my health and life coverage?**

**A** Yes. The GIC recommends that you elect Deferred Retirement coverage. If you are getting health coverage elsewhere the GIC suggests that you keep, at a minimum, basic life insurance, paying 100% of the premium until retirement. At retirement, you may resume GIC health coverage; the Commonwealth will contribute the prevailing contribution percentage for retirees. If you are not getting health coverage elsewhere, you may keep basic life and health insurance paying 100% of the premiums until retirement.

If you decide not to leave your money in your retirement system, your benefits as a Deferred Retiree end. You may elect to continue your health and life coverage, with some limitations on time and/or benefit levels, in one of the following ways: 39-week life and health layoff coverage, GIC COBRA health coverage only, conversion to non-group health coverage with your current carrier, portability of life insurance, or conversion to non-group life insurance with the current carrier.

**Q I have been laid off and have twenty years or more of state service and I am age 55 (or ten or more years of state service at any age). How may I continue my health and life coverage with the GIC?**

**A** If you retire after twenty or more years of state service (at any age) or ten or more years of state service at age 55 or over, you are eligible for health and life insurance coverage. See the Retirement section for additional information.

Should you elect not to retire, the GIC recommends that you elect Deferred Retirement coverage provided you leave your retirement money in the state retirement system (see previous answer). For the other alternatives, see page 9.

**Q If I quit or am fired from my job, and am not retiring, may I continue my health and life coverage?**

**A** Yes. In general, you may continue your health and life coverage with the same options as employees who have left state service, depending on your length of state service (see pages 7-8). You are eligible for continuation health coverage, but if your agency determines that you have been fired for gross misconduct, you are not eligible for COBRA coverage.

**Q** When I retire, does my LTD, GIC Dental/Vision, DCAP and/or HCSA coverage end?

**A** Yes. Your participation in these plans end at retirement. You may elect to continue GIC Dental/Vision under COBRA.

**Q** I am retiring from state employment. What are my GIC benefit choices?

**A** As a GIC benefit retiree you may continue health and life coverage with the GIC. You may want to consider reducing or dropping your optional life insurance because you may no longer need it. You can do this at any time by writing to the GIC. However, you may not increase the amount of your optional life insurance. You may also change health plans at retirement and may enroll in the GIC Retiree Dental Plan.

**Q** Am I eligible for a state pension?

**A** The State Retirement Board (or your retirement board) determines whether you meet eligibility requirements for a state pension. Call or visit your retirement board before you retire to confirm your pension benefits and arrange to receive your monthly pension check. The Board can also tell you about cost-of-living increases, taxes, and when to expect your first check.

**Q** Will I be eligible to continue my GIC health and life benefits when I retire?

**A** Yes, providing you receive a pension from a state retirement system.

### Q What are my basic life and health insurance premiums?

**A** See the rate pages on our web site for details.

**Q** I do not have GIC life or health benefits. May I elect the benefits upon my retirement?

**A** You may be eligible for GIC health and basic life insurance. Contact the GIC for the appropriate enrollment forms and eligibility criteria.

**Q** What should I do while I am still working to make sure my health insurance continues when I retire?

**A** Before you retire, see your GIC Coordinator at your worksite to complete the necessary paperwork.

## Q What are my health coverage choices when I retire?

**A** Your choices depend on whether you or (if applicable) your spouse is eligible for Medicare and where you live.

If you are and/or your spouse are eligible for Medicare Part A for free, state law requires that to be covered by the GIC you enroll in Medicare Part B and select a GIC Medicare plan. Refer to the annual GIC Retiree/Survivor Benefit Decision

Guide for general information, or contact the plans for more detailed information.

**Q May I change health plans when I retire?**

**A** Yes. You may change health plans at retirement and thereafter only during annual enrollment (usually early April to early May), or if you leave your HMO/PPO's service area. You must make your request to the GIC in writing. Annual enrollment changes are effective the following July 1.

**Q May I still provide health coverage for my family when I retire?**

**A** Yes. All GIC health plans offer family coverage for your spouse and other eligible dependents.

**Q I am retired and getting divorced; what happens to my spouse's health coverage?**

**A** You must notify the GIC of your divorce. Your spouse's health coverage depends on the terms of your divorce decree. The GIC will determine your former spouse's coverage after you submit the provisions of the decree relating to health insurance. Send the GIC: Your name, GIC identification number (usually Social Security number), address, signature and date. Include your former spouse's last known home address and a copy of the following sections of the divorce decree: page with the 'divorce absolute' date, health insurance provisions, and signature pages. The GIC will provide you and your former spouse with information about continuation coverage.

**Q I am a divorced state retiree who is getting remarried (or my former spouse is getting remarried). What do I need to do?**

**A** You must notify the GIC of the remarriage. Failure to notify the GIC of a remarriage will result in financial liabilities to you and/or your former spouse. Retirees must notify the GIC in writing of the remarriage. If you remarry, send a copy of your new marriage certificate and your former spouse's last known home address, and a copy of the following sections of your divorce decree: page with 'divorce absolute' date, health insurance language, and signature pages. If your former spouse remarries, send the GIC the remarriage date.

**Q As an active employee, I had GIC Dental/Vision coverage. What happens to this coverage when I retire?**

**A** The GIC Dental/Vision plan is for eligible active employees only and your enrollment in the plan ends at retirement. You may instead continue your former dental/vision coverage for up to 18 months through COBRA. You will be billed directly for 102% of the premium under this option. You may enroll in the Retiree Dental Plan when COBRA Dental/Vision coverage ends or at retirement. In general, COBRA dental benefits are more comprehensive than the Retiree Dental Plan.

**Q How do I pay the premiums for my health and/or life insurance coverage after I retire?**

**A** Premiums will be deducted from your monthly pension. As it frequently takes several months to receive your first pension check, the GIC will bill you directly for premiums due until your GIC deductions begin.

**Q What should I do if I do not receive a premium bill from the GIC after I retire?**

**A** Although this happens infrequently, if you have not received a bill by your third month of retirement, call the GIC to avoid losing your coverage. Do not send a payment without a bill unless you are instructed to do so.

**Q What will my health and life insurance coverage cost after I retire?**

**A** The premium costs change at least annually; refer to the rate chart on our web site for current rates.

**Q What will optional life insurance cost after I retire?**

**A** Optional life insurance premium rates increase substantially when you retire and as you age. At retirement, review the amount of your optional life insurance coverage to see if it makes economic sense for you to keep it; if you have paid off your major debts (such as your home and education loans), a savings vehicle may be a more appropriate alternative. You may only cancel or decrease your optional life coverage after you retire.

**Q When I left state service, I elected Deferred Retirement coverage and kept life insurance-only coverage with the GIC. I am now planning to retire and collect a state pension. How do I pick up retiree health coverage with the GIC?**

**A** When you apply for retirement benefits with your retirement board, notify the GIC in writing of your planned retirement date and request that your GIC coverage be changed from life insurance only to life and health coverage. The GIC will determine and notify you of your health coverage effective date.

**Q If I am retired and waive my pension, what happens to my GIC benefits?**

**A** Your GIC benefits as a retiree end. You are however eligible to continue benefits as a Deferred Retiree (see pages 7 - 8).

**Q What happens to my GIC benefits if my pension is revoked?**

**A** You will no longer be eligible for GIC benefits.

**Q What happens to my GIC benefits if I withdraw my retirement money from my retirement system?**

**A** You will no longer be eligible for GIC benefits.

## Q What is Medicare?

**A** Medicare is a federal health insurance program for retirees age 65 or older and certain younger disabled people. Medicare has two parts: Part A covers inpatient hospital care, some skilled nursing facility care and hospice care. Medicare Part B covers physician care, diagnostic x-rays and lab tests, and durable medical equipment.

## Q Am I eligible for Medicare benefits?

**A** When you or your spouse is age 65 or over, visit your local Social Security Administration office to find out if you are eligible for Medicare Part A for free. If you or your spouse is disabled, contact Social Security about Medicare eligibility. If eligible, contact the GIC for your health plan options. If you (the state employee) continue working after age 65 you and/or your spouse must enroll in Medicare Part A and defer your Medicare Part B until you retire.

## Q Should I enroll in Medicare if I am eligible?

**A** If you are eligible for Medicare Part A for free, state law requires that, to be covered by the GIC you and/or your spouse must enroll in Medicare Part A. If you are retired you must also enroll in Medicare Part B and join a Medicare Plan sponsored by the GIC.

If you and/or your spouse are eligible, you will receive Medicare Part A for free. You must pay a monthly premium for Medicare Part B.

## Q When must I enroll in Medicare?

**A** When you or your spouse turns 65, and if you (the enrollee) are retired, state law requires that you must enroll in Medicare Parts A and B. If you (the enrollee) continue working after age 65, you and/or your spouse must enroll in Medicare Part A. When you retire, you and/or your spouse must enroll in Medicare Part B and join a Medicare plan sponsored by the GIC.

If you do not enroll in Medicare Part B within the required time, you will be required to pay federal government penalties. Also, you may be ineligible for health coverage through the GIC if you do not enroll in Part B within the required time.

## Q I have been a state employee for my entire career and have never contributed to Social Security. Why do I need to know about Medicare?

**A** You may still be eligible for Medicare benefits. When you turn age 65, visit your local Social Security office for eligibility information. If you are not eligible for Medicare, the GIC will require proof from the Social Security Administration that you are not eligible.



## Q How do I pay for Medicare Part B?

**A** In most cases, the federal government will deduct the Medicare Part B premium from your monthly Social Security check. If you or your spouse are not eligible for a Social Security check, but are eligible for Medicare Part A for free, the federal government will bill you for the Medicare Part B premium.

## Q Should I choose only Medicare for health care coverage?

**A** "Medicare only" coverage is not recommended as it provides limited coverage. To ensure comprehensive coverage, Medicare retirees should enroll in a Medicare health plan sponsored by the GIC.

## Q What are the consequences if I cancel or do not pay Medicare Part B?

**A** If you cancel or do not pay Medicare Part B, the GIC is required to terminate your GIC health coverage. This would mean that you would only have Medicare Part A coverage for inpatient hospital care. You would no longer have coverage for:

- ◆ Physician office visits
- ◆ Prescription drugs
- ◆ Outpatient mental health/substance abuse care
- ◆ Outpatient surgery
- ◆ X-rays and diagnostic tests
- ◆ Hearing aids
- ◆ And more

## Q If I enroll in a GIC Medicare supplemental plan, what happens to my spouse's (under age 65) coverage?

**A** Your spouse will continue to be covered under your existing non-Medicare plan until he or she becomes eligible for Medicare. You and your spouse must join the same health plan.

## Q How do I find out about Medicare Plan options?

**A** When you retire at age 65 or over, or if you are retired and turn age 65, the GIC will contact you about your health plan options. The GIC's annual Retiree/Survivor Benefit Decision Guide provides an overview of your Medicare health plan choices.

## Q When can I change GIC Medicare Plans?

**A** You may change your GIC Medicare Plan during annual enrollment or if you move out of a GIC HMO Medicare Plan's service area.





name, Social Security Number and a certified copy of the death certificate and any GIC life insurance certificates. After the GIC processes the claim, the life insurance carrier will pay the beneficiary(ies). The GIC will also send the surviving spouse a survivor health insurance application. (Surviving spouses are not eligible for life insurance coverage.) A divorced spouse covered by the GIC at the time of the insured's death may elect GIC COBRA health coverage.

**Q How do I change my life insurance beneficiary information (including if one dies or changes his/her name or address)?**

**A** Active employees should see their GIC Coordinator for a beneficiary form. Retirees should write to or call the GIC for a beneficiary form. Send the completed beneficiary form to the GIC.

**Q What happens to my life insurance when I leave my job with the Commonwealth?**

**A** If you leave state employment, or become ineligible for life insurance due to a reduction in hours, you may elect life insurance portability coverage or convert to a non-group policy with the life insurance carrier. Portability coverage, which is a term life insurance policy, provides more favorable rates than converting to a non-group whole life policy. Retirees and persons with medical conditions that materially affect their life expectancy are ineligible for portability coverage but are eligible for a non-group conversion policy. When you terminate state service, the GIC's life insurance carrier will send you information about your options. Keep in mind that you must submit your forms before the deadline specified in the carrier materials.

**Q What happens to my life insurance coverage should I become disabled?**

**A** If you are under age 60 and are permanently and totally disabled, you may apply for a waiver of your monthly life insurance premium for your life insurance coverage. *You must apply for the waiver of life insurance premium within 24 months of the onset of disability.* For a waiver application, call the GIC.

**Q Am I entitled to any of my life insurance benefits if I have a terminal illness?**

**A** If you are terminally ill with a life expectancy of less than 12 months, and you wish to use some of the proceeds from your life insurance coverage, you may apply for an "accelerated benefit" in an amount between 25% and 75% of your total amount of life insurance coverage for your own use, with the balance of the proceeds paid to your beneficiaries upon your death. For an application, call the GIC.

**Q If I die, is my surviving spouse (and dependents) eligible for GIC health insurance?**

**A** If you (the state employee/retiree) have coverage through the GIC at the time of your death, your surviving spouse is eligible to continue his/her GIC health insurance coverage until he/she remarries or dies. Your surviving spouse must apply for survivor spouse coverage, as it is not an automatic benefit. To apply, your surviving spouse must contact the GIC. Upon approval, the GIC will directly bill your surviving spouse for his/her share of the health insurance premium. If your eligible dependents are covered under your health plan at the time of your death, they continue GIC coverage until they reach age 19. See Family Status Changes section on page 2.

**Q If at the time of my death my retirement pension ends, can my surviving spouse continue GIC health insurance coverage?**

**A** Yes. Your surviving spouse must apply for survivor coverage, as it is not an automatic benefit. To apply, your surviving spouse must contact the GIC for an application. Upon approval of the application, the GIC will directly bill your surviving spouse for his/her share of the health insurance premium.

**Q I am a surviving spouse of a Commonwealth employee/retiree enrolled in a GIC health plan and am turning age 65. What do I need to do?**

**A** When you are age 65, visit your local Social Security office to find out if you are eligible for Medicare Part A for free. If you are eligible, you must enroll in Medicare Part A and Part B and enroll in a GIC Medicare Plan. The GIC will contact you about your options.

**Q What happens to my minor children's coverage if I die after retiring and there is no surviving spouse?**

**A** Upon your death, your minor children may continue in the group health plan until age 19, provided they continue to meet eligibility requirements and are not eligible for other group health coverage.

**Q I am the former spouse of a Commonwealth employee/retiree who has died and was covered under his/her GIC health coverage. Am I eligible to continue GIC health coverage?**

**A** GIC health coverage for an employee's/retiree's former spouse ends when the employee/retiree dies, but you may apply for continuing coverage through COBRA. Call the GIC for more information and an application.

**Q I am a surviving spouse who was covered through my spouse's GIC health insurance coverage. When does my coverage end?**

**A** Survivor health insurance coverage ends when you stop premium payments, remarry, or die, whichever occurs first.

**GIC (Group Insurance Commission)** - The Group Insurance Commission (GIC) is a quasi-independent state agency governed by an 11-member commission appointed by the Governor. It provides and administers health insurance and other benefits for the Commonwealth's employees and retirees, and their dependents and survivors. The GIC also covers housing and redevelopment authority personnel, and retired municipal employees and teachers in certain governmental units.

**CIC (Catastrophic Illness Coverage)** - CIC is an optional part of the Commonwealth Indemnity Plan. CIC increases the benefits for most covered services to 100%, subject to deductibles and co-payments. It is an enrollee-pay-all benefit. Enrollees without CIC pay higher deductibles and receive only 80% coverage for some services. Over 99% of current Indemnity Plan members select CIC.

**PPO (Preferred Provider Organization)** - A health plan that offers coverage by network doctors, hospitals, and other health care providers, but also provides (lower) benefits for treatment by out of network providers.

**HMO (Health Maintenance Organization)** - A health plan arrangement that provides coverage for treatment by a network of doctors, hospitals and other health care providers within a certain geographic area. HMOs do not offer out-of-network benefits.

**PCP (Primary Care Physician)** - The doctor you select within an HMO or PPO to provide and coordinate your health care.

**RMT (Retired Municipal Teacher)** - A retired teacher from a city, town or school district who is receiving a pension from the Teacher's Retirement Board and whose municipality has elected to participate in the GIC RMT program.

**EGR (Elderly Governmental Retiree)** - A state employee who retired from state service prior to January 1, 1956. Also, certain municipal employees who retired prior to the date their city or town elected to provide health insurance benefits to their employees/retirees and whose municipality has elected to participate in the EGR program.

**COBRA** - A federal law that allows enrollees to continue their health coverage for a limited period of time after their employer-sponsored coverage ends as the result of certain employment or life events. Premiums cost 102% of the full cost group premium, but are 150% of the premium if coverage is extended beyond the original time period due to disability. See page 2 for student coverage information, page 4 for divorce/remarriage information, and pages 5-10 for employment-related information.

**Deferred Retirement** - An option to maintain group life and health coverage for insureds who leave state service and are eligible for a pension, but do not wish to retire yet.

**Non-Group Conversion** - An option to convert life or health coverage for insureds when their group life or health coverage ends.

**39-week Layoff Coverage** - Allows laid off state insureds to continue their group health and life insurance for up to 39 weeks (about 9 months) paying the full cost of the premium.

**Portability** - Allows active employees, who end employment with the Commonwealth, to continue life insurance coverage at the same level and type of coverage and for the same cost as the GIC group plan. Certain eligibility and time limits apply.

**DCAP** - (Dependent Care Assistance Program) - This is a pre-tax benefit that allows participants to set aside on a pre-tax basis up to \$5000 of their income per family annually to pay certain employment-related dependent care expenses, such as child care or day camp.

**HCSA** - (Health Care Spending Account) - This is a pre-tax benefit that allows employees to contribute a specified amount of money on a pre-tax basis to pay for non-covered health care costs such as co-payments, deductibles, eyeglasses and orthodontia.

**LTD** - (Long Term Disability) - This is an income replacement program for active employees providing a tax-free benefit of up to 50% of one's salary if they are disabled by illness or injury renders them unable to work for longer than 90 days. Employees pay 100% of the premium.



**Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

**MITT ROMNEY, Governor**

**KERRY HEALEY, Lieutenant Governor**

**Group Insurance Commission**

**DOLORES L. MITCHELL, Executive Director**

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**See our web site for forms and other contact information**